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ABSTRACT

The construction of tests of oral competence in a foreign language requires consideration of several factors. The face validity of the test, or the degree to which students feel they are performing a real communicative act, is illustrated with a number of model testing situations. Content validity, or the ability of a test to measure what has been learned by students, is demonstrated by sample tests at the beginning and intermediate levels. Criteria for scoring tests are illustrated with further examples from description and listening tests. Finally, rating scales are discussed with a variety of examples. A brief bibliography is appended. (JB)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Testing Oral Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Introduction

The assessment of a student's ability to speak in a foreign language has always been one of the most difficult tasks that the foreign language teacher must carry out. During the height of the use of the audiolingual approach to language teaching, various methods and techniques were designed to evaluate the speaking skills. These tests concentrated on the evaluation of such discrete linguistic items as stress, intonation patterns, and the pronunciation of isolated sounds, or the correct oral production of isolated grammatical features of the foreign language. Recent research has shown, however, that the evaluation of the ability to correctly produce discrete oral features does not necessarily give the best indication of a student's ability to use the foreign language for the purpose of communication (e.g., Bartz 1974, Schulz 1974). Although teachers obviously want to evaluate their students' pronunciation and grammar, the evidence in the literature on testing language proficiency points to the need for going beyond the testing of discrete oral features.

Speaking in a foreign language involves more than being able to pronounce correctly, to put the stress on the correct syllable, or to supply the correct verb forms or endings. Rather, oral communication involves the combination of many skills and depends on the student's ability to synthesize--not just to produce in isolation--discrete linguistic components. Foreign language teachers, like their colleagues in other areas, often forget that students perceive the priorities of a course by what is tested. Thus, if the tests in a foreign language class evaluate only one skill or one aspect of a skill, students may consider other important aspects of the language unworthy of attention.

In spite of the emphasis placed on the oral skills during the 60s and the 70s, many foreign language teachers still do not test their students' speaking abilities. The listening component of the oral skills, however, does seem to receive more attention in today's classroom. The reason for this is quite obvious if one looks at the ways in which these two skills can be evaluated. Jones (1977) has pointed out, "In educational measurement a distinction is frequently made between knowledge tests and performance tests." The distinction between the evaluation of the listening and speaking skills is basically one of "knowledge" versus "performance." In order to evaluate the listening skill, an objective paper and pencil instrument can be designed; however, the evaluation of the speaking skill is a much more subjective and time-consuming process. The evaluation of oral communication in the foreign language must, however, involve a combination of both these skills.

The development of the oral skills in foreign language learning can roughly be viewed as a process involving two basic levels--the "linguistic" level, in which the student acquires the skills necessary to perceive and produce grammatically correct utterances, and the "communication" level, in which the student acquires the skills necessary to carry out oral communicative interactions.

Techniques and examples for testing the oral skills on a linguistic level are abundant and quite well defined in the professional literature (see Lado 1961 and Valette 1977). Techniques and examples for testing on the communicative level, however, are just beginning to emerge. This paper will attempt, therefore, to give teachers some ideas for developing their own testing techniques for the evaluation of their students' oral communicative skills.

In the construction of communicative tests (or any other tests, for that matter), four important aspects must be taken into consideration initially: face validity, content validity, administration, and scoring.

Face Validity

In order for a test to be a true measure of communicative ability, students must feel that they are performing a

"real" communicative act, and that they are being evaluated on criteria that do indeed measure the degree of their success in communicating. Thus, any test that attempts to measure communicative ability and that strives for some degree of face validity should involve a communicative situation. Because it is difficult to provide within the classroom a "real" situation--that is, interaction with a native speaker in the native context--the communicative situation will almost always have to be simulated. Since tests, as stated previously, indicate to the students the priority placed on course objectives, tests measuring communicative ability must be as realistic as possible; otherwise they will convey a distorted message to the student concerning the goals of the course. Below are some examples of the use of a communicative situation in a test.

Speaking Test

Pretend that a German (French, Spanish, etc.) student is living with you and will be attending your school for a semester. Although her program has been arranged, she would like to know what your daily class schedule is so that she can get permission to visit some of your classes tomorrow. Organize your thoughts and give a description of your schedule, including the times (class periods), the subjects, and the teachers.

Listening Tests

1. You are staying in a foreign hotel and are alone in your room. Your friend who is traveling with you has gone out to do some shopping. The telephone rings, you answer it, and after appropriate greeting, the party on the line asks to talk with your friend. You try to tell the caller that s(he) is not there, but he insists on giving you a message. You hear him say the following. Listen carefully and take notes in English. Then write in English your message for your friend. (Telephone message is read in the foreign language by the teacher to the students.)

2. You arrive at the airport in Madrid (Berlin, Paris, etc.). Not knowing how to get to your hotel,

you ask for instructions from one of the people standing near the main entrance. He gives you directions. On the attached map, follow the instructions you will hear and mark with an X the building he identifies as your hotel. The directions will be given twice. (The student has a copy of a simplified map of the appropriate city.)

Administration: The directions are read twice, with adequate pauses between sentences so that the students can follow on their maps the instructions they hear.

Suggested Scoring: Give three points for each direction correctly followed up to the point where the student gets "lost."

Each test item above simulates a communicative situation. In this way, students are made aware that their performance is taking place in the context of a "real-life" situation. Such simulation can be accomplished by describing the communicative situation for the student in the introductory instructions to the test item.

A type of test that does not necessarily require a communicative setting, because the design of the test itself creates a communicative situation, is the interview test. Two examples follow below:

Interview (providing information)

You will be asked some questions about your home. Try to give as much information as you can. If you do not understand a question, you may ask in German (French, Spanish, etc.) to have it repeated.

Administration: Ask each of the following questions once. Repeat or restate only if the student requests. Be careful to keep a logical sequence of questions. If a student's answer warrants it, reword a question to preserve coherence in your dialogue with the student. (The questions are in the foreign language.)

1. Where do you live?

2. Do you live in a house or an apartment?

3. How many rooms does your house (apartment) have?

4. Name each room and at least three pieces of furniture in each.

5. Tell me more about your bedroom. Describe all the furniture. What color are the walls? Do you share the room?

6. In which room do you spend most of your time?

7. Where do you usually do your homework?

8. In which room(s) do you have a television set?

9. Describe your living room and the kind of furniture in it.

10. Describe the outside of your house (apartment): colors, number of stories, etc.

Suggested Scoring: The most feasible and appropriate method of scoring an interview of this type is to use a rating scale as described on pp. 18-22.

Interview (soliciting information)

We will pretend that I am a foreign student visiting your school and that you have been assigned to get some information from me for the school newspaper. Try to conduct the interview in as natural a manner as you can. Introduce yourself and close the interview in an appropriate manner. Remember, I cannot understand or speak English very well, so this interview must be conducted in (the foreign language). Take notes in English as you ask me questions. At the end of the interview, write in English all you have found out about me. Try to obtain the following information: (This should be given to the students in English.)

1. My name
2. Where I come from in the foreign country
3. With whom I am staying in the U.S.
4. What courses I plan to take at your school
5. How long I will stay in the U.S.
6. Where I plan to travel in the U.S. during school vacations
7. If I would like to live here
8. When I plan to return to my home
9. What my career plans are
10. My first impressions of the U.S.

Suggested Scoring: Assign points to each item of information satisfactorily included in the student's summary of the interview.

Content Validity

Content validity refers to the ability of a test to measure what has been taught and subsequently learned by the students. It is obvious that teachers must see that the test is designed so that it contains items that correlate with the content of instruction. Thus, it follows that unless students are given practice in oral communication in the foreign language classroom, evaluation of communication may not be valid, unless it is assumed that the grammatical practice done in the classroom will automatically result in the ability to use the language on a communicative level. Research has shown, however, that such an assumption is not tenable.

In addition, in order to ensure content validity, the level of instruction must, of course, also be taken into account when constructing a test. The evaluation of oral

communication can be carried out from the very earliest stages of instruction if certain basic guidelines are followed.

Oral Communication Tests for the Beginning Levels

Testing oral communication at the beginning levels of instruction must, of course, be confined to items that will require a limited amount of vocabulary or structural complexity. The description of visuals or realia is probably the easiest technique for early language-learning evaluation. Simple oral descriptions involving a simulated communicative situation will provide a good test of vocabulary and structure. For example, the teacher can provide magazine or newspaper cutouts in several areas or categories, such as clothing, foods, sports, etc. Using the items of clothing, the student can pretend he or she is a commentator at a fashion show and must say at least one thing about each picture. Or in the case of the sports visuals, the student can be a TV sports commentator who must describe the action in each picture with at least one sentence. It should be pointed out that the teacher should not expect a large amount of speech at this level, but evaluation of this type from the very outset of language instruction will put some emphasis on the ability to use the language spontaneously rather than focusing only on the ability to manipulate the language correctly.

In another possible procedure for testing at the beginning levels, one student describes a simple line drawing of an object while the other members of the class are required to draw the object based on the student's description. Or a student describes one of a series of pictures visible to the entire class, who select the picture the student is attempting to describe.

Tests that attempt to evaluate the ability to "converse" at this level could involve the interview technique described earlier in which the student is required to obtain information from the teacher or another student. Topic matter and content would, of course, have to be adapted to the beginning levels of language learning. For

example, if a unit on foods and meals has just been completed, the following interview test item could be administered:

> Pretend you are a doctor and you need to find out the following information from your patient (the teacher):
>
> 1. Does (s)he drink milk?
> 2. How much?
> 3. Does (s)he eat breakfast?
> 4. What does (s)he usually eat for breakfast?
> 5. When does (s)he eat dinner?
> 6. How often does (s)he eat vegetables?

Students can receive the above instructions in English and carry out their interview exercise with the teacher. Scoring can be based on a written summary in English.

Evaluation of oral communication at the beginning levels of language can be carried out if careful and creative planning is involved and if the teacher keeps in mind that such evaluation must be structured and that the student must be given explicit instructions. Although tests of oral communication are designed to evaluate the ability of the student to use the language spontaneously and freely, this does not mean that such tests should be unstructured. Teachers in the past have found it difficult to evaluate "free expression"--especially at the earlier levels--because they have equated such exercises with an "openness" or a lack of structure. To instruct the student to "talk about something" usually results in a long silence.

In summary, three basic points need to be considered in the construction of beginning-level oral communication tests:

1. Emphasis should be on simple descriptive exercises, based on vocabulary and structure presented in class.

2. In order to provide content validity, practice in description or obtaining information should be carried out before testing.

3. Beginning oral communication tests must be highly structured and include explicit directions and clearly outlined tasks.

Oral Communication Tests for the Intermediate-Advanced Levels

At the intermediate and advanced levels of instruction, the three points above are still important, but the range of possibilities for test items increases. Both monologue and conversational techniques are again possible at the advanced levels, including descriptions of visuals or realia and the interview technique at a more difficult level. However, at the more advanced levels, much more emphasis can be put upon the simulation of communicative situations. Examples of such test items, which involve specific situations in the foreign culture, appear throughout this paper and can also be found in Linder (1977).

Some additional examples of test items that utilize a communicative situation and that are appropriate for the intermediate and advanced levels are described below.

Title: SHOPPING IN A FOOD MARKET

Preparation: The teacher prepares a set of index cards on which pictures of grocery items are drawn or pasted.

Instructions to the Student: You are in a German (French, Spanish, etc.) food market. You have completed all your shopping except one item, for which you cannot remember the (foreign language) word. A picture of the item is on the index card you have selected from a pack of cards. Describe the item to the "clerk" (teacher) so that he or she will be able to find it. (The teacher cannot see the card that the student is describing and must try to select the correct item based on the student's description.)

Scoring: The teacher may use one of the rating scales described on pp. 18-22, or may assign points based on the number of "tries" the student had to make before he or she could find the item, e.g., the teacher identifies the item on the first try--10 points; on the second try--8 points; etc.

Variation: This test item can also be carried out with a second student playing the role of the clerk;

however, it should be noted that in this situation, scoring reliability may be a problem, and the "clerk's" listening comprehension ability becomes another variable of the test. (Based on Linder 1977)

Title: AT THE TRAVEL AGENCY

Preparation: The teacher acquires a number of maps of France (Germany, Spain, etc.) and on each outlines in red a different route that the students will use to describe their planned trip. The teacher should keep one unmarked map on which he or she can trace the trip as the student describes it.

Instructions to the Student: You are in a travel agent's office in (the foreign country). In front of you, you have a map of (the appropriate country). On the map you will see a red line showing where you plan to travel. Also indicated on the map are the number of days you plan to spend in each city. You want to travel by train and must explain to the travel agent (teacher) exactly where you plan to go and the number of days you want to stay at each location, so that the agent can issue your train tickets.

Scoring: The teacher may use one of the rating scales described on pp. 18-22 or may assign points to each segment of the trip that the student explains successfully.

Title: MAKING A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

Preparation: The teacher prepares a set of several cards on which are listed at least five symptoms (in English) of an illness, e.g., a bad cold, flu, chicken pox, mumps.

Instructions to the Student: You are living in (the foreign country) and have suddenly become quite ill. You call the doctor to make an appointment. In your conversation with the nurse (teacher) you must describe your symptoms, in (the foreign language), which are written in English on a card your teacher will give you. Pretend you are on the phone setting up your appointment.

Scoring: The teacher may use one of the rating scales described on pp. 18-22 or may assign points to each symptom that the student communicates successfully to the "nurse."

Title: WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT

Preparation: The teacher prepares a set of visuals containing diagrams of various accidents involving automobiles, buses, bicycles, pedestrians, etc. The visuals should show the direction in which the vehicles were traveling, point of impact, and other relevant details.

Instructions to the Student: You have been standing at a corner in (foreign city), waiting to cross the street, when suddenly you see an accident. A police officer arrives, and you are asked to describe what happened. In front of you, you have a visual depicting the accident. Describe the accident to the police officer (teacher).

Scoring: The teacher may use one of the rating scales described on pp. 18-22. The "Amount of Communication" scale may be especially appropriate for this item.

The use of a communicative situation not only provides a setting in which the student can perform, but also enhances the credibility and relevance that students view as lacking in many foreign language classes. The relationship between the abstract components of language learning and the real world of communication is not very clear to many students. The testing of oral communication in the classroom can help to promote an understanding of this relationship. Thus, one of the goals of testing on the more advanced levels should be to involve students as much as possible in tasks that will require them to demonstrate their ability to function in the real world of communication. Tests that simulate such "real" situations can provide for a better understanding of what the ultimate tasks in language performance will be.

Administration

With time at a premium, teachers must consider how long it takes to administer tests. Evaluating the listening skill in isolation, as illustrated by the two listening tests described earlier, can be done by administering the test to the class as a whole. Tests that evaluate the speaking skill or the integration of the listening and speaking skills on a communicative level are more complex to administer. Tests that measure speaking on a communication level, by their very definition, will almost always have to be administered on an individual basis.

Recording student responses in a language laboratory might be feasible for the testing of speaking at this level, but this procedure would diminish the face validity of the test by creating an unrealistic activity in terms of communication. In the study conducted by Schulz (1974), it was found that students view testing procedures requiring responses to be recorded not only as unrealistic and artificial, but also as highly threatening. Teachers, therefore, may need to reassess priorities in order to allow some time for individual evaluations. They will find, perhaps to their surprise, that speaking tests such as those cited earlier can be administered rapidly while the rest of the class is involved in some other activity.

Scoring

Any activity that purports to be a test must involve a scoring procedure. In scoring a test that claims to measure a student's ability to communicate, discrete errors cannot be the primary criteria by which success (or lack of it) is calculated. Rather, the criteria must be based on the student's ability to produce or comprehend a message in the foreign language. This will involve a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the tester. The question that must be dealt with, especially in the evaluation of the speaking skill, is to what degree discrete errors interfere with the intended message of the speaker. Clark (1972) suggests that communicative and linguistic criteria not be mixed in the evaluation of

communicative ability. He believes that this mixture "serves only to obscure the distinction between the two types of measurement and decrease the validity of the test as a direct measure of communicative proficiency." However, as Schulz and Bartz (1975) point out,

> It is difficult to totally separate the two criteria, as the linguistic quality of an utterance can influence comprehensibility, the basic communicative criterion. Further, while a major goal of most college or secondary language programs is communicative ability in the target language, there is a justifiable concern with linguistic correctness because . . . we are not just attempting to teach survival communication . . ., we are also trying to teach literacy in another language.

The scoring of pure listening items can be carried out with relative ease and objectivity as illustrated in the test item below.

Listening Test

> Pretend you have just arrived in (the foreign country) and after being there for several days, you are invited by your host to a party given by some of his or her friends. During the party you overhear the following conversation. While listening, jot down in English the following information:
>
> 1. What exam both have to study for
> 2. What the girl must do in addition to studying
> 3. When she might do this
> 4. When the boy suggests they study
> 5. What else the boy wants to do
> 6. The girl's final suggestion
>
> Administration: Students hear the following conversation (in the foreign language) twice:

Boy: Do you have any plans for this weekend?

Girl: No, but I will have to study for an exam in Latin.

Boy: So do I, maybe we can get together sometime to study?

Girl: Well, I don't really know right now exactly when I'll be able to study, because I just remembered, I also have to go shopping with my mother.

Boy: When are you going shopping?

Girl: Maybe Saturday afternoon.

Boy: Could we study Sunday afternoon and then go to the movies around seven?

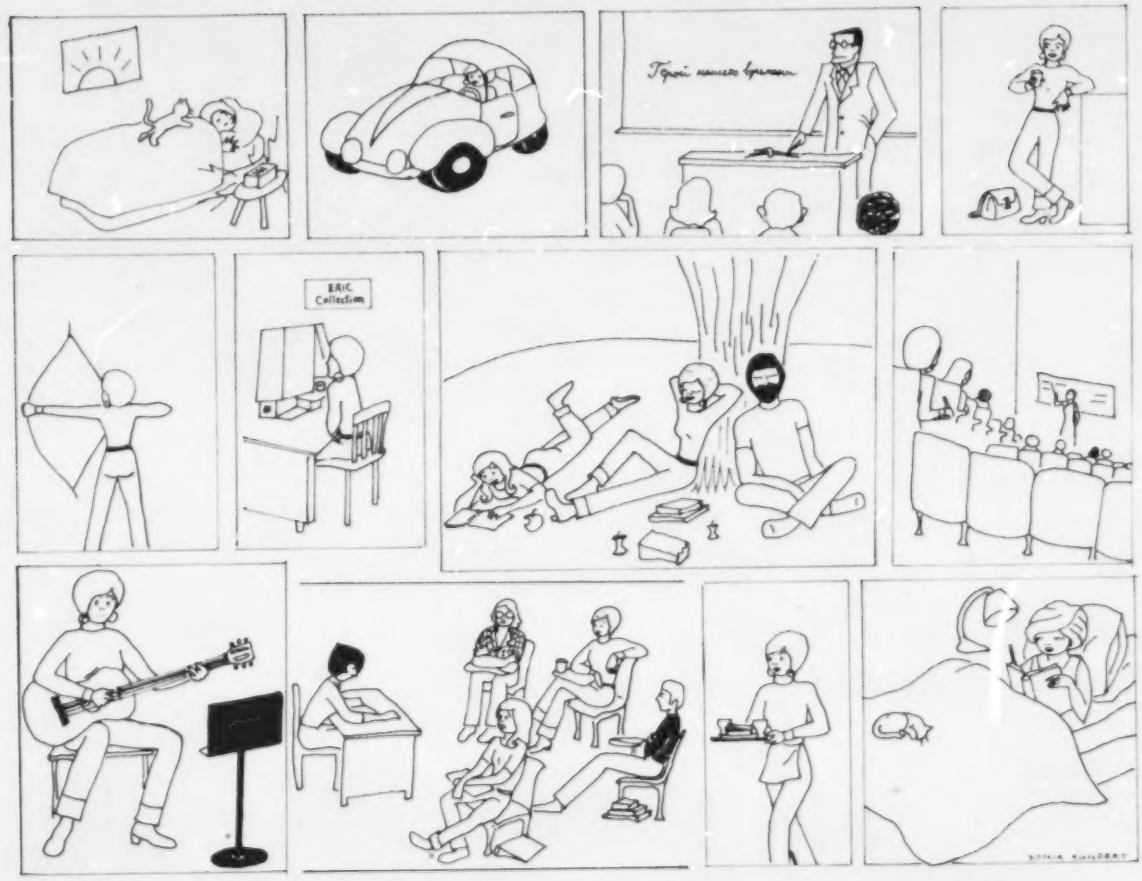
Girl: Why don't you give me a call and we'll decide then?

Boy: O.K., I'll call you in the morning.

The scoring of the interview test previously cited, in which the student must solicit information, can be carried out simply by checking the student's account in English of the information he or she obtained through the interview. However, the types of speaking tests in which students provide information must involve some sort of evaluation scale for the purposes of scoring. The following test, which requires the student to describe a series of cartoons, requires scoring based on such a scale.

Description

You will see a series of drawings which tell a story about a day in the life of a college student. Take a minute to look over the drawings and to organize your thoughts. Then tell the story in (the foreign language). Say as much as you can. Use your imagination to add whatever details you wish, even though they might not be pictured. You will not be interrupted. (Pictures on next page.)



19

Scoring: The teacher is instructed to use a scale that is attached to the test to rate the student on the amount of communication. A definition of the scale is also attached, which the teacher is asked to read before administering the test item (Schulz 1974).

Rating Scales

If the primary behavior being measured is speaking, the scoring procedure will almost always have to be based on some type of rating scale. Recently, many different types of rating scales have been developed for the purpose of evaluating oral communication. The Foreign Service Institute, for example, has developed a six-point rating scale for each of five language areas: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The Foreign Service Interview, described by Clark (1972), uses five "levels" ranging from "elementary proficiency" (able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements) to "native or bilingual proficiency" (speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker).

This scale has also been defined in more detail in a publication that contains the proceedings of a two-day conference on the testing of speaking proficiency conducted by the Educational Testing Service (Clark 1978). This report contains three papers that are especially useful for adapting the FSI Interview scales and levels for classroom use. Reschke (1978) proposes that a modification of the FSI Interview Scale be made to overcome two basic problems: (1) the administration of the test, which requires two persons, and (2) the broad range of the FSI scale, which becomes meaningless in testing high school or college students who have only limited oral proficiency. Reschke suggests that the testing team be reduced to one person and that the scale be modified to "fine tune" each FSI level by adding a horizontal scale or decimal system of numbers to subdivide each level. Thus, if a student falls somewhere between two levels on the FSI scale, a more precise and refined evaluation can be made. Reschke also provides a description for each of these "fine-tune levels."

Albert (1978) describes the testing program in the New Brunswick senior high schools, where the FSI scale is

used with hardly any modification. Although the scale is apparently used successfully, it requires a rather extensive teacher-training program, which is conducted by ETS and described in the paper.

Graham (1978) describes an "FSI Diagnostic Feedback" checklist developed by the Language Training Mission in Provo, Utah. Based on the five language areas evaluated by the FSI rating scale, this checklist is designed to point out specific deficiencies in grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. The test is conducted in the same manner as the regular FSI interview, but scoring is done by means of the checklist rather than the FSI levels of proficiency. The French example included in the paper illustrates how the teacher can focus on specific speaking problems in a much more objective way than a simple rating scale would allow.

Savignon (1972) uses different criteria to evaluate different parts of her oral communicative competencies test. She employs six-point scales ranging from "none" to "great" for such criteria as effort to communicate, amount of communication, comprehensibility, naturalness and poise, and fluency.

In their textbook French for Mastery (1975), the Valettes suggest a five-point scale for evaluating oral question/answer exercises:

4 points: The student answers accurately and without hesitation.

3 points: The student answers accurately but with hesitation or after having the sentence repeated.

2 points: The student gives the wrong answer on the first try, but answers without hesitation on the second attempt.

1 point: The student answers accurately but with hesitation on the second attempt.

0 points: The student gives the wrong answer on both attempts.

Schulz and Bartz each use similar scales for the evaluation of oral communication: fluency, quality of communication, amount of communication, comprehensibility, and effort to communicate. In the Bartz study, two native speakers of German evaluated 50 high school German students with a reliability of .99 among raters. The "amount of communication" scale served as the best predictor of the students' total score on the communicative tests administered. Below is a description of this scale, along with a definition of each of the five levels:

· AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION

General definition: The quantity of information relevant to the communication situation the student is able to convey

Definition of each level on the scale:

1. Virtually no relevant information was conveyed by the student.

2. Very little relevant information was conveyed by the student.

3. Some relevant information was conveyed by the student.

4. A fair amount of relevant information was conveyed by the student.

5. Most relevant information was conveyed by the student.

6. All relevant information was conveyed by the student. (Bartz 1974)

The reader may want to refer to the other rating scales below used in both the Bartz (1974) and the Schulz (1974) studies; however, for the purposes of classroom evaluation, the "amount of communication" scale may be adequate, since, as pointed out earlier, this scale had the highest correlation with the total score on the oral communication tests given in the Bartz study.

The five scales described below could be used either separately or in combination, depending upon whether or

not the teacher is interested in evaluating certain aspects of oral communication more specifically. Each of these scales has been used in the studies referred to above, and a number of statistical procedures have been used to determine reliability among raters, scoring validity, etc.

A. FLUENCY (adapted from FSI rating procedures)

General definition: Fluency does not refer to absolute speed of delivery, since native speakers of any language often show wide variations in this area. Fluency refers to overall smoothness, continuity, and naturalness of the student's speech, as opposed to pauses for rephrasing sentences, groping for words, and so forth.

Definition of each level on the scale:

1. Very many unnatural pauses, very halting and fragmentary delivery

2. Quite a few unnatural pauses, frequently halting and fragmentary delivery

3. Some unnatural pauses, occasionally halting and fragmentary delivery

4. Hardly any unnatural pauses, fairly smooth and effortless delivery

5. No unnatural pauses, almost effortless and smooth, but still perceptibly non-native

6. As effortless and smooth as speech of native speaker (Bartz 1974)

B. COMPREHENSIBILITY

General definition: The ability of the student to make himself understood, to convey meaning

Definition of each level on the scale:

1. No comprehension, couldn't understand a thing student said

2. Comprehended small bits and pieces, isolated words

3. Comprehended some phrases or word clusters

4. Comprehended short, simple sentences

5. Comprehended most of what student said

6. Comprehended all of what student said (Schulz 1974)

C. AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION (described above)

D. QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION

General definition: The grammatical correctness of the student's utterances

Definition of each level on the scale:

1. No utterances rendered correctly

2. Structure of very few utterances rendered correctly

3. Some utterances rendered correctly, but many structural problems remain

4. Many correct utterances, but some problems remain with structures

5. Most utterances rendered correctly; only minor problems with structure

6. All utterances rendered correctly (Schulz 1974)

E. EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE

General definition: The student's willingness to express himself and to get his message across. How hard does the student try to make himself understood? Does he make any attempt to express himself? Does he use gestures to help express himself? Or does he withdraw into an embarrassed silence that makes it very difficult for him to communicate at

all? Ask yourself this question: To what degree does the student show an effort and a willingness to express himself in [German]?

Definition of each level on the scale:

1. Student makes little effort to communicate, doesn't seem to care if he completes the task

2. Student makes some effort to communicate, but does not try very hard to complete the task

3. Student makes an effort to communicate, tries to complete the task, may add something not required by the task

4. Student makes a real effort to communicate, tries very hard to complete the task, may add something not required by the task

5. Student makes a special effort to communicate, shows an extremely high effort to complete the task, and goes beyond the required task

6. Student makes an unusually high effort to communicate, shows an almost over-zealous effort to complete the task, goes way beyond the required task, and uses all possible resources, verbal and non-verbal, to express himself (Bartz 1974)

As suggested above, the "amount of communication" scale alone may be adequate, because it would probably be difficult, if not impossible, for the classroom teacher to evaluate the student's performance using all these scales simultaneously. Or the teacher could select any one of the other scales above, depending on what aspect of oral communication he or she wishes to evaluate more specifically. A rating sheet as shown below may, however, facilitate simultaneous scoring, which can be done after the teacher has had practice using the scales separately.

A. FLUENCY

1 2 3 4 5 6

B. COMPREHENSIBILITY

1 2 3 4 5 6

C. AMOUNT OF COMMUNICATION

1 2 3 4 5 6

D. QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION

1 2 3 4 5 6

E. EFFORT TO COMMUNICATE

1 2 3 4 5 6

* * *

The purpose of this paper has been to illustrate some ways of evaluating oral communication in the foreign language classroom. The evaluation of the oral skills on a linguistic level has been developed and carried out extensively over the past several decades; however, expertise in evaluation of the oral skills on a communicative level is still limited despite a recognized need for such testing. The development of instruments that will evaluate students' oral skills on a communication level needs to be refined and expanded so that classroom teachers can employ procedures that will indeed reflect the major goal of foreign language instruction--the ability to communicate in the foreign language. As Rivers (1973) has stated, "Let us remember that by our testing they shall know us, far better than we shall know them."

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